

Brookline Complete Streets Policy

DRAFT 01/11/2016

1. Complete Streets Objectives

The Town of Brookline shall plan, construct, and maintain its public ways to enhance safety, access, inclusion, convenience and comfort for all users, thereby creating “complete streets.” The Town will create a comprehensive transportation network that sufficiently accommodates people of all ages and abilities, whether traveling by foot, bicycle, wheelchair,¹ mass transit, or motor vehicle.² Achieving these objectives will require context-sensitive treatments and operational strategies to balance the needs of all users.

To meet the objectives above, and to further Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) transportation goals to shift users to healthier and more sustainable transportation modes as well as to comply with M.G.L. Chapter 90I §1 for the Town to be eligible to receive funding under MassDOT’s Complete Streets Program, the Town’s transportation projects shall be designed and implemented to provide safe and comfortable access for healthy transportation choices such as walking, bicycling, and mass transit. The needs and safety of the Town’s most vulnerable users shall be given special consideration during project planning. Users may be considered vulnerable by virtue of their mode of transportation, such as bicycling or walking, or because of their age or ability, such as small children, senior citizens, and people with disabilities.

Brookline’s transportation network will maintain or enhance the Town’s core strengths and values:

- Convenient, inclusive and safe access by people of all ages and abilities, to all community destinations and activities, via all forms of transportation
- Walkable neighborhood structure, commercial districts, and neighborhood school districts
- A network of open spaces, beautiful public spaces, and streets that incorporate trees, vegetation, and art, encourage social engagement, are pleasant to move about and be in, and contribute to a healthy environment
- Economic vitality of local businesses
- Environmental sustainability and transportation choices that reduce carbon emissions and other adverse environmental and public health impacts
- Active, healthy lifestyles
- Social equity³

¹ Even where not explicit, all references in this Policy to walking and pedestrians shall apply also to wheelchair use and wheelchair users. The Americans with Disabilities Act rules define “wheelchair” as “a manually-operated or power-driven device designed primarily for use by an individual with a mobility disability for the main purpose of indoor or of both indoor and outdoor locomotion.”

² “Motor vehicle” is used broadly here, and includes delivery and service vehicles.

³ In the context of this policy, social equity is maintained and enhanced by incorporating positive measures and interventions to encourage equitable outcomes for all groups potentially affected, with particular attention to income, age, gender, minority status, modes used, location, etc.

2. Projects and Phases

To provide appropriate accommodation and promote safe travel for users of all ages and abilities, including those who walk, use a wheelchair, bicycle, and use public transit, the Town shall incorporate Complete Streets elements into planning, transportation projects and other projects affecting the public right of way, and as feasible, when modifying existing streets, including repaving, new pavement markings, refinishing, resetting curbs, and sidewalk reconstruction. Complete Streets elements are design features that facilitate achievement of the Complete Streets Objectives. Safe accommodation for all users should be provided within comprehensive, connected, direct, and low-stress networks in a manner supportive of the surrounding community, and in accordance with Brookline's connected structure, public space constraints, and core strengths and values listed above.

Complete Streets elements should be incorporated at the beginning of the project development process to avoid additional costs and potential delays that may arise when they are not added until later, or would require retrofit after project completion.

The Town should approach every relevant program, as well as every transportation, public utilities, infrastructure, and public and private development project, as an opportunity to improve the public way and the transportation network for all users. Complete Streets work shall be done by the Department of Public Works (DPW) and its Transportation Division, and by the Planning and Community Development Department, and as needed, in cooperation with other departments, agencies, and jurisdictions. For a project inside the Town's boundaries but outside its jurisdiction, the Town shall advocate that the project comply with the Complete Streets Policy.

All transportation infrastructure and street design projects in Brookline receiving federal, state, Town, or private funding or requiring approval by the Town should adhere to the Complete Streets Policy. For development projects that require board review as specified by the Zoning By-law, or development projects affecting the public way, compliance with the Complete Streets Policy will be encouraged, to the extent not prohibited by the Zoning By-law or other relevant laws and regulations. The Department of Planning and Community Development will encourage Town land use boards to consider compliance with the Policy in their deliberations. Privately held land to be incorporated into the public way by the Town should comply with the Complete Streets Policy.

If a representative of the Town participates in meetings involving design and planning of programs, transportation projects, or private development projects not under the Town's jurisdiction, the Town shall advocate that the project be carried out in accordance with the principles of the Complete Streets Policy.

3. Design Guidance, Flexibility, and Context Sensitivity

The Town shall be guided by the most current accepted planning and design standards and guidance that are consistent with the Complete Streets Policy, and shall periodically update a public list of relevant guidance documents to be used for this purpose. Examples of the guidance documents to be used are listed Attachment A. Unique characteristics and policies of the Town shall be considered.

At a minimum, works and programs identified under Projects and Phases above—as well as networks of principal bicycle and pedestrian routes being developed by the Town—shall be guided by the following:

- A. Complete Streets elements shall be consistent with a setting's context, accounting for features such as adjacent land use, architectural form, the nature and qualities of the public realm, and expected uses of the route. For example, a quiet residential street with sidewalks, minimal motor traffic, and typical vehicle speeds of 20 miles per hour or less might be considered "complete" as-is.
- B. The safety, comfort, and convenience of vulnerable users must be fully considered.
- C. Continuous sidewalks shall be provided on both sides of a roadway where possible.
- D. New and reconstructed sidewalks shall be accessible to and usable by people with disabilities in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, Massachusetts Architectural Access Board Rules and Regulations (521 CMR), and other applicable accessibility standards. Obstacles that limit accessibility such that compliance with standards cannot be met, including utility poles, mailboxes, and landscaping, shall be modified, relocated, removed, or worked around to achieve compliance.

- E. Sidewalks and crosswalks should be adequately lit with surfaces clearly visible after dark to all pedestrians, including vulnerable populations such as senior citizens and persons with limited vision.
- F. The safety, comfort, and convenience of people crossing streets must be addressed through design considerations that include, for example, appropriate location and spacing of crossings, visibility, crossing distances, wait times, conflict reduction, and features that increase the awareness of people traveling through a pedestrian crossing.
- G. The safety, comfort, and convenience of people bicycling or walking must be considered, and where appropriate and possible, provided for through separation of disparate types of users. Separated bicycle facilities include, for example, physically separated bicycle lanes (“cycle tracks”), buffered and conventional bicycle lanes, contraflow travel, bicycle boxes, and dedicated signals. Pedestrian facilities can be separated from bicycles and motor vehicles using tree lawns, street furniture, planters, crosswalk stanchions, bollards, crossing islands, and changes in elevation. The volume and speed of traffic must be considered in determining the needed degree of separation, if any.
- H. There may be areas where traffic calming and access management should be prioritized to implement a lower-speed / lower-volume street. In certain areas, a “shared space” or pedestrian priority approach may be desirable.
- I. Transit facilities such as shelters and seating at stops, stops located on the far side of intersections, exclusive bus lanes, and signal priority must be fully considered and implemented in design of streets and intersections along transit routes wherever applicable and practical.
- J. On sidewalks along streets that are extensively used as walking routes, and are specially designated by the Town, the Town shall seek to provide benches at intervals no greater than one quarter mile.
- K. Recognizing that trucks and vans provide essential goods and services, the routes, access and parking necessary to allow such vehicles to maneuver safely and efficiently should be considered. Ways to lessen the adverse impacts of such vehicles should also be considered.
- L. When normal access in the public way is impeded during construction, adequate accommodation must be made for people to walk and bicycle safely.
- M. For transportation and other projects affecting the public way, the Town shall strive to incorporate green infrastructure such as trees and other landscaping, bioswales and rain gardens, and permeable surfaces, wherever applicable and practical, to naturally manage stormwater, improve watershed health, reduce heat island effects, and beautify Brookline’s streets and public spaces.

In planning and implementing street projects, all departments and agencies of Brookline will maintain sensitivity to local conditions in both residential and business districts. They will seek to work with residents, shopkeepers, institutions, and other stakeholders to solicit input on project design, ensure that a strong sense of place is maintained, cultivate a sense of inclusion, and maximize benefit to the community. It will be important to the success of the Complete Streets Policy to ensure that the project development process includes early consideration of the land use and transportation context and connectivity of the project, identification of gaps or deficiencies in the network for various user groups that could be addressed by the project, and assessment of the trade-offs required to balance the needs of all users.

4. Exceptions

Safe, comfortable, and convenient access for healthy transportation choices and vulnerable users should be incorporated in all work identified under Projects and Phases above, with only the following exceptions:

- Emergency repairs and routine maintenance;
- Where people are prohibited by law from using the facility on foot or bicycle;
- Where the cost of establishing bikeways or walkways as part of the project would be disproportionate to anticipated future use and value;

- Where, as determined by the Transportation Board, existing right of way constraints preclude addition of transit, bicycle, or pedestrian facilities, or where such addition would create unsafe conditions. In this case, the Town shall consider measures such as lane reduction, lane narrowing, on-street parking relocation or reduction, signage, traffic calming, and changes to flow direction to implement a lower-speed or shared street, on which a typical driver would not feel comfortable driving above a safe speed.

If, in the process of approving a particular project, the Transportation Board determines that it is necessary to make an exception to the Complete Streets Policy, the Board will document the factors considered in a design exception statement published on the Town's website.

5. Implementation

A Complete Streets Implementation Plan will be developed by an entity designated by the Board of Selectmen. Additionally, the Board of Selectmen will designate an entity responsible for oversight of and reporting on Complete Streets implementation. At a minimum, the implementation activities described below are needed to initiate, achieve, and maintain compliance with the Complete Streets Policy. Town departments will coordinate their activities related to implementation of this Complete Streets Policy.

The Town will strive to meet all criteria required to achieve and maintain certification by MassDOT as a Complete Streets community under M.G.L. Chapter 90I § 1c, in order for the Town to be eligible to receive funding pursuant to MassDOT's Complete Streets Program.

The Town will assess what additional staff resources, if any, are needed to effectively implement this Policy, and report its findings to the Board of Selectmen.

The Town will prepare a Complete Streets prioritization plan, and shall seek funding for its preparation. The plan will include an assessment of Brookline's streets and sidewalks from a Complete Streets perspective. The assessment will examine the strengths and limitations of the streets and sidewalks in supporting motor vehicles, public transportation, bicycles, and pedestrians, as well as the connectivity of local walking, biking, and transit networks with respect to popular origins and destinations. The plan will provide a basis for proposing future transportation projects, and the Town will draw upon the plan in reevaluating prioritization of transportation elements in the Capital Improvement Plan and DPW operations budgets to support Complete Streets implementation. The prioritization plan will be updated as needed to keep it current. Within three years, the Town will incorporate comprehensive inventories and maps of existing and anticipated walking, bicycling, and transit networks into the plan, including connections to significant features and to each other.

The Town will develop procedures to incorporate Complete Streets elements when conducting municipal road repairs, upgrades, or expansion projects in the public right-of-way.

When planning a street project that involves creation of landscaping or new sidewalks/pathways (e.g., as part of traffic calming or intersection redesign) within the public way, the Transportation Division will consult with the Parks and Open Space Division on the design prior to bringing the design before the Transportation Board. The Town will develop a process to assign and track maintenance responsibility for such areas (e.g., by Highways, Parks and Open Space, or abutters) so that landscaped or hardscaped areas created within the public way are adequately maintained.

When developing or updating relevant plans, regulations, or by-laws, the Town shall acknowledge and incorporate the principles of this Complete Streets Policy.

Town planning activities shall identify opportunities to enhance the connectivity of walking, bicycling, and "safe routes to schools" networks. Plans shall strive to strengthen walking and bicycling connections among transportation facilities and common destinations.

6. Performance Measures

The Town will report on its success in achieving the objectives of this Policy as part of its annual progress report to MassDOT. That report will comply with M.G.L. Chapter 90I §1, in order for the Town to be eligible to receive funding pursuant to MassDOT's Complete Streets Program. The Town's evaluation will take into account the difficulties of isolating and measuring the impacts of this Policy.

The Town will establish benchmark metrics and measure them at regular intervals. At a minimum, the metrics will include annual pedestrian and bicycle counts.

The Board of Selectmen, in consultation with relevant Town departments, shall determine the entities responsible for establishing the metrics and compiling the data. Metrics employed should meet MassDOT's criteria of validity, significance, ease of interpretation, availability, and ability to track trends over time.

The Town shall review, and revise as necessary, its data collection procedures to more accurately track crashes, mobility-related injuries in the public way, and traffic violations in a way that enables the Town to better understand and mitigate principal causes of these incidents.

The Town will make performance measure data publicly accessible online and in a way that protects privacy.

Attachment A. Examples of Design Guidance Documents to be Used

- Brookline-specific policies, plans, and guidelines adopted by the Town, including but not limited to the Bicycle Green Routes Plan, Climate Action Plan, Comprehensive Plan, Crosswalk Policy, Open Space Plan, and Traffic Calming Policy and Procedures
- **Active Transportation Alliance:** Complete Streets Complete Networks: A Manual for the Design of Active Transportation
- **American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO):** Guide for the Development of Bicycle Facilities, Guide for the Planning, Design and Operations of Pedestrian Facilities
- **American Planning Association (APA):** Complete Streets: Best Policy and Implementation Practices
- **American Planning Association & American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE):** U.S. Traffic Calming Manual
- **Association of Pedestrian and Bicycle Professionals:** Bicycle Parking Guidelines
- **Boston Transportation Department:** Boston Complete Streets Guidelines
- **Federal Highway Administration (FHWA): Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD),** PEDSAFE: Pedestrian Safety Guide and Countermeasures Selection System
- **Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE):** Designing Walkable Urban Thoroughfares: A Context Sensitive Approach: An ITE Recommended Practice, Neighborhood Street Design Guidelines
- **Massachusetts Department of Transportation:** Project Development and Design Guide; GreenDOT Policy Initiative; Separated Bike Lane Planning and Design Guide
- **Massachusetts Architectural Access Board (AAB):** 521CMR Rules and Regulations
- **Mineta Transportation Institute:** Low-Stress Bicycling and Network Connectivity
- **National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO):** Urban Bikeway Design Guide, Urban Street Design Guide
- **U.S. Architectural and Transportation Barriers Compliance Board (the Access Board):** Accessible Rights-of-Way: A Design Guide